



CHAPTER 5

Special Report on Part-Time and Temporary Workers in Washington's Labor Force

JOB GROWTH IN WASHINGTON has been strong since 1995, coinciding with the beginning of a new hiring cycle in the aerospace industry, expansion in the state's software and other "high technology" sectors, and strong national economic growth. In 1997 and 1998, the state's unemployment rate, at 4.8 percent, was the lowest in the past 30 years.

Despite a generally bright employment picture, many economists and labor market analysts have questioned the quality of jobs created both nationally and in Washington. A great deal of attention has focused on the increase in part-time and temporary work. These work situations are generally associated with lower wages and lack of benefits, such as health care insurance. The Washington State Population Survey¹, conducted in the spring of 1998, provides an opportunity to estimate the number and characteristics of workers engaged in part-time or temporary work in Washington.

In 1998, 494,000 workers, or 17.8 percent of the state total, considered themselves to be in a temporary work situation while 21.3 percent (or 592,000) worked part-time — defined in the Survey as 35 hours per week or less. About 266,000 workers (9.6 percent of the total workforce) were in both part-time and temporary status; 820,000 (about 30 percent of the total workforce) were in either a temporary or a part time situation in 1998 — or both — as shown in the shaded area of the table below.

Table 5-1
Part-Time and Temporary Workers, 1998

	Temporary Workers	Not-Temporary Workers	Total
Full-Time	228,000	1,962,000	2,190,000
Part-Time	266,000	326,000	592,000
Total	494,000	2,288,000	2,782,000

Involuntary Temporary and Part-Time Workers

Slightly more than half of the 820,000 temporary or part-time workers (422,000) have entered into these working arrangements by choice. Temporary and part-time work apparently satisfy personal, family, or economic needs for many people. However, the remaining 398,000 workers wanted to switch to permanent or full-time employment if given the opportunity. These workers are categorized as "involuntary" part-time or temporary workers.

¹ The Washington State Population Survey was conducted in the spring of 1998 to provide social, demographic, and economic information about Washington. Responses were obtained from telephone interviews of 7,279 households that represented the state as a whole. The survey was designed by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and conducted by the Washington State University Social and Economic Sciences Research Center. Data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error. More information about the state survey is available under "Population/Data" at <http://www.wa.gov/ofm/>.

As detailed in Table 5-2 on the next page, there were about 325,000 involuntary temporary workers in 1998 and 144,000 involuntary part-time workers. About 71,000 workers were both in part-time and temporary status on an involuntary basis, leaving a total 398,000 persons involuntarily employed in either a part-time or temporary situation (or both).

Table 5-2
Involuntary Temporary and Part-Time Workers

	Temporary Voluntary	Temporary Involuntary	Not Temporary	Total
Full-Time	42,000	186,000	1,962,000	2,191,000
Part-Time Voluntary	120,000	68,000	260,000	448,000
Part-Time Involuntary	7,000	71,000	66,000	144,000
Total	169,000	325,000	2,288,000	2,783,000

Employer Benefits

Involuntary part-time or temporary workers have less access to fringe benefits from their employers. About 78 percent of involuntary part-time or temporary workers had health insurance coverage; and more than one-third of them obtained the insurance coverage from sources other than their own employers. In comparison, 93 percent of other workers had health insurance. Overall, fringe benefits are much lower for involuntary part-time or temporary workers.

Percent of Workers with Access to Employer-Provided Fringe Benefits*:

Benefits	Involuntary Part-Time or Temporary Workers	Other Workers
Paid Vacation/Sick Leaves	60%	78%
Retirement Benefits	44%	68%
Educational Assistance	31%	51%
On-Site Childcare	7%	9%
Childcare Subsidies	3%	6%
Health Insurance Plan	78%	93%

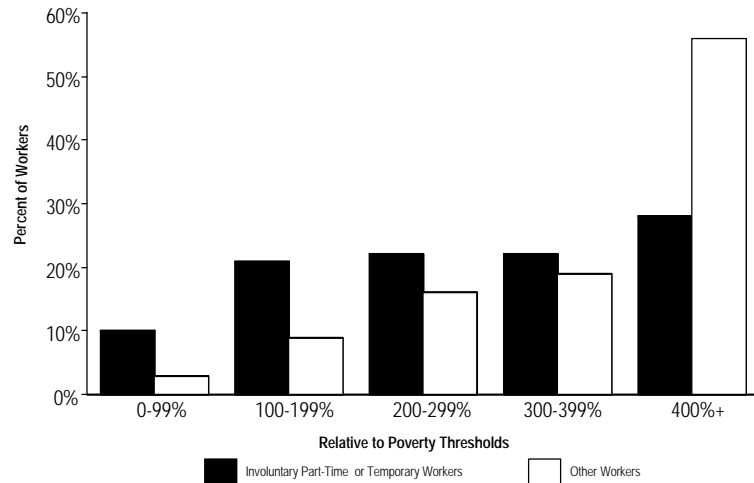
* For items other than health insurance, the statistics represent only the household members who answered the Survey questionnaire; they thus do not include the benefit situation of other household members/workers. The statistics show whether the benefits were provided; they do not reveal whether the benefits were needed or actually received.

Wages and Income

As expected, being in involuntary part-time or temporary work affects wages and income. The median hourly wage in 1998 of involuntary part-time or temporary workers in the state was \$9.17, only half the median level (\$19.63) for other workers.

Although the wages of involuntary temporary or part-time workers were relatively low, they were more likely to have supplementary earnings from a second job. The Survey shows 17 percent of involuntary temporary or part-time workers held a second job, while only 11 percent of other workers had a second job.

Figure 5-1
Involuntary Part-Time or Temporary Workers



Nevertheless, the income picture for involuntary part-time or temporary workers is still weak. About 30 percent of involuntary part-time or temporary workers were in households with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty thresholds.

Incidence of Uninsured and Low Income Workers

The table below illustrates the part-time and temporary workers who are most vulnerable — those who are involuntarily employed in a part-time or temporary situation and who lack health insurance coverage and/or reside in a low-income household (defined as below 200 percent of the federal poverty level).

Among the 398,000 involuntary part-time or temporary workers, about 119,000 are low income (at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level), 86,000 lack health insurance coverage, and 40,000 are both in low income status and without insurance coverage. The Survey therefore indicates that there are a total of 165,000 involuntary part-time or temporary workers who were either in a low-income household or who lacked health insurance, putting them in the highest-risk category.

Table 5-3
Income and Health Insurance Status
Of Part-Time and Temporary Workers

	Insured	Uninsured	Total
Below 200% of Poverty	79,000	40,000	119,000
Above 200% of Poverty	233,000	46,000	279,000
Total	312,000	86,000	398,000

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the Washington State Population Survey, in 1998 there were about 165,00 workers employed involuntarily in either a part-time or temporary situation (or both) and who also were in a low income household (under 200 percent of poverty) or lacked health insurance coverage (or both). Among the 820,000 Washington workers employed in a part-time or temporary work situation in 1998, this sub-group appears to be the most vulnerable.